

# Service Plan

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

**Policy: 700.0025**

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The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families utilizes a family centered practice approach in developing, with the family, a Service Plan. The Service Plan outlines the Department's intervention and array of services deemed appropriate to build on the strengths and address the individual needs of each family. During initial and ongoing family assessments, areas of risk and safety as well as the strengths and needs of the family are jointly identified. Building upon this process, the goal of service planning is to develop an individualized culturally sensitive family plan that meets the safety, permanency and well-being requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (PL 150-89). The child's health, safety and well-being are the paramount concerns in making reasonable efforts towards reunification with parents or guardians.

The Department is mandated by Federal Law, State Law and Department Policy to make reasonable efforts to prevent removal of children from their families and to provide services to parents and children to maintain family preservation. Federal Law (42 USC 675) and federal regulations (45 CFR 1356.21) require that each service plan for a child placed in substitute care must include specific information to determine the appropriateness of and necessity for out-of-home placement.

Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 42-72-10 and Department policy require a written service plan for the care and treatment of each child under the Department's supervision. This applies to children and youth:

- Receiving services through a Family Services Unit (FSU)
- Active with Probation
- Sentenced to the Rhode Island Training School (RITS)

Rhode Island Family Court Rules, Rules of Juvenile Proceedings: Rule 17C, requires a service plan be submitted within 30 (thirty) days when there is a finding of Dependency/Neglect/Abuse on a petition filed by the Department.

The Service Plan must:

- Be developed jointly with parents or guardians and child, if age appropriate.
- Be developed no later than sixty (60) days from the date of removal from home for child in care open to FSU/Probation or sixty (60) days from assignment for child in the home.
- Be developed and submitted to the Family Court within thirty (30) days of a finding of Dependency/Neglect/Abuse on a petition filed by the Department. In such cases the completion of the service plan will need to occur prior to sixty (60) days to adhere to the Family Court Rule relating to Dependency/Neglect/Abuse findings.
- Be developed within thirty (30) days for all RITS sentenced youth.
- Contain a permanency goal for the child.
- Describe the services offered and provided to prevent removal of the child from the home, including the individual services provided to each parent, child and foster parent to reunify the family.
- Be designed to achieve a safe placement for the child in the least restrictive (most family-like) setting available, address the proximity of the child's placement to the home of the

parents when the permanency goal is reunification and address how the placement is consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child.

- Contain a visitation plan that is consistent with the specified permanency goal (refer to Policy 700.0040, Visitation).
- Document the steps to finalize a placement when the permanency goal is or becomes adoption or another permanent placement option.
- Include to the extent available and accessible updated health and education records of the child (Federal Law also requires the Department to provide a copy of this information to the foster parent or foster care provider at the time of each placement).
- Be formally reviewed by the Administrative Review Unit (ARU) no less frequently than every six (6) months for child or youth in out of home placement.
- Be signed by all appropriate parties including age appropriate child (including any addenda added after the original signature).
- Include for youth 16 and older a written description of the programs and services which will help the youth prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living.

The DCYF Service Plan (DCYF #032) is time limited, individualized, strength-based and needs driven. The Service Plan clarifies how the parties will work together by identifying mutual responsibilities and expectations of each parent, child and the Department toward reaching the identified permanency goal. Staff must involve both the custodial and non-custodial parent in service planning and service provision. The Department is responsible to locate and engage absent parents in the service planning process.

Full Disclosure begins, emphasizing the shortened time frames for reunification required by ASFA, as soon as a child is placed in substitute care and continues throughout the family's involvement with the Department. Full Disclosure involves discussions with the birth family regarding their legal rights, responsibilities, permanency timeframes, permanency options, consequences and expectations of the Department. Concurrent Planning, which requires intensive work to achieve reunification while identifying a placement option for the child that will be permanent if reunification efforts are not successful, should be practiced when appropriate and reflected in the Service Plan (refer to Policy 700.0215, Concurrent Planning Policy).

The Department has an appeals process for parents/guardians and children, to the extent of their ability to participate, who disagree with portions of the Service Plan and wish to appeal its implementation (refer to Policy 100.0055, Complaints and Hearings).

## **Related Procedures**

[Service Plan](#)

## **Related Policy**

[Service Plan Review](#)

[Family Assessment](#)

## Service Plan

### Procedure From Policy 700.0025: Service Plan

- A. Timeframes for completion, review and approval of the Service Plan
  - 1. Family Services and Probation
    - a. The Service Plan (DCYF #032) is created in RICHIST for each child or youth receiving services through a Family Services or Probation Unit (refer to RICHIST Window Help, Service Plan Doc).
    - b. The initial Service Plan is completed by the assigned Family Services Caseworker or Probation Officer within sixty (60) days of removal from the home or sixty (60) days of assignment to FSU/Probation.
    - c. Each Service Plan is unique to the child or youth's individual and family needs, including identification of individual and family strengths.
    - d. Each Service Plan includes a visitation plan if the child is in care (refer to Policy 700.0040, Visitation Policy).
    - e. In situations where the case is monitored by the Family Court, and there is an adjudication on a Dependency, Neglect and/or Abuse petition, the Service Plan is developed and submitted to the Court within thirty (30) days of the adjudication.
    - f. Subsequent Service Plans are completed by the assigned Family Service Caseworker/Probation Officer no less frequently than in six (6) month intervals. Revisions to the Service Plan may be necessary prior to the six (6) month interval:
      - i. If the child with an initial Service Plan in FSU has other family members active in the Division, all Service Plans subsequent to the initial one shall be completed in synchronization with the other family members.
      - ii. If a substantive change in circumstances occurs or there is a change in the permanency goal, a new Service Plan must be developed within thirty (30) working days. In such circumstances the subsequent Service Plan shall be developed six (6) months from the time of the latest Service Plan.
    - g. For a child active in FSU/Probation for whom a report of child abuse or neglect is subsequently indicated, the primary service worker is responsible for any needed changes in an existing Service Plan within thirty (30) days of the completed investigation.
    - h. Any change in the Service Plan which does not alter the permanency goal for the child is entered as an Addendum to the DCYF #032. Changes must be acknowledged by the signature of all parties who originally signed the Service Plan.
    - i. Once a Service Plan has been incorporated into a court order, any change in the plan shall be put before the court in the form of a motion filed in advance of the court date. This motion shall be filed in conjunction with DCYF legal staff and with notice provided to other involved parties.
    - j. A copy of the Service Plan is submitted to the Court at each Permanency Hearing for children placed in foster care (refer to Policy 1100.0000, Obtaining Custody of Child through the Dependent/Neglect/Abuse Petition).
    - k. The Department in compliance with Federal Law also has in place a family review system to review the Service Plan of each child in

placement no less frequently than every six (6) months (refer to Policy 700.0030, Service Plan Review).

- I. In cases where there is dual responsibility, the Probation Officer, FSU Caseworker or the respective supervisors discuss and mutually decide upon primary and secondary assignments in RICHIST and mutual responsibilities in service planning (refer to Policy 800.0000, Transfer and Dual Supervision of Youth by Juvenile Probation and Family Services).
  - i. For youth active with FSU who are placed on Probation, the Probation Officer will include the Conditions of Probation (COP) and other appropriate objectives and tasks into the existing approved Service Plan in RICHIST through an addendum.
  - ii. For youth active with Probation who open for services in FSU, the FSU Caseworker will include appropriate objectives and tasks specific to the individual needs of the family into the existing approved Service Plan in RICHIST through an addendum.
  - iii. If there is not an existing approved Service Plan, the FSU Caseworker and Probation Officer will coordinate the development of the Service Plan and include appropriate objectives and tasks specific to the individual needs of the family into the unapproved Service Plan in RICHIST.
- m. For youth transferring to FSU or Probation from the RITS, the Discharge Plan that is created as part of the Service Plan remains active for sixty (60) days after the youth's release, with the ability to amend prior to creating a new Service Plan (refer to Policy 1200.1620, Transfer of Youth to/from the Rhode Island Training School, RITS).
- n. Completed Service Plan is sent to the primary worker's supervisor for approval.
  - i. All sections of the Service Plan must be completed prior to sending the document for approval, including the visitation plan and identification of family strengths.
  - ii. For dual supervision cases, the worker with primary assignment is responsible to send the Service Plan to his or her supervisor for approval.
  - iii. If the FSU Caseworker, RITS Clinical Social Worker and/or Probation Officer do not agree about sections of the Service Plan and are unable to resolve differences, the matter will be referred to the next level in the chain of command.

## 2. The Rhode Island Training School

- a. The Service Plan (DCYF #032) is created in RICHIST for a youth sentenced to the RI Training School unique to his or her individual and family needs, including identification of individual and family strengths and a visitation plan if appropriate (refer to RICHIST Window Help, Service Plan Doc).
- b. The initial Service Plan is completed by the assigned RITS Clinical Social Worker thirty (30) days following adjudication.
- c. The Coordinator of Clinical Services, or appropriate designee, will schedule a Service Plan meeting within seven (7) days and the meeting will occur within thirty (30) days of the youth's sentencing.
  - i. If there is dual supervision, the appropriate FSU Caseworker/Probation Officer will be notified of the meeting and will make every effort to attend.

- ii. Also invited to the meeting will be the youth's parents, unit manager, clinical social worker, clinical director or designee, medical/clinical representative and RI Training School Education Program representative.
  - iii. An individualized Service Plan outlining academic and/or vocational programs and various treatment programs shall be developed at the Service Plan meeting.
  - iv. The development of the Service Plan and the IEP shall be coordinated, when appropriate, to provide a comprehensive integrated plan (refer to Policy 1200.1732, The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Policy).
- d. The Service Plan shall be reviewed and revised, if appropriate, at the bi-monthly review meeting.
- e. Sixty (60) days prior to a youth's discharge from the RITS, a transition/discharge planning meeting takes place to identify clinical and medical needs, as well as to identify an appropriate permanency goal for the youth.
- f. The clinical social worker is responsible for creating and maintaining the Service Plan for the resident in RICHIST.
- g. The RI Training School Education Program representative is responsible for entering educational information for the resident in RICHIST.
- h. The unit manager is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the resident's Service Plan and for bringing it to the attention of appropriate staff.
- i. In cases where there is dual responsibility, the Probation Officer, RITS Clinical Social Worker, FSU Caseworker or the respective supervisors discuss and mutually decide upon primary and secondary assignments in RICHIST and mutual responsibilities in service planning.
  - i. For youth sentenced to the RITS who transfer from Family Services or Probation, the RITS Clinical Social Worker will include appropriate objectives and tasks specific to the youth's sentence into the existing approved Service Plan in RICHIST through an addendum.
  - ii. For youth sentenced without prior DCYF involvement, the RITS Clinical Social Worker will create a Service Plan in RICHIST.
- j. Completed Service Plans are sent to the primary worker's supervisor for approval.
  - i. All sections of the Service Plan must be completed prior to sending the document for approval, including the visitation agreement and identification of family strengths.
  - ii. For dual supervision cases, the worker with primary assignment is responsible to send the Service Plan to his or her supervisor for approval.
  - iii. If the RITS Clinical Social Worker, FSU Caseworker and/or Probation Officer do not agree about sections of the Service Plan and are unable to resolve differences, the matter will be referred to the next level in the chain of command.

B. Development of the Service Plan

- 1. A Service Plan must be developed jointly with the child, if age appropriate, parents or guardians.

- a. This capacity will vary among children; however, most school-aged children can be expected to participate to some extent if they are verbal and understand most of the events occurring in their lives.
    - b. Workers will consult with the child (as age appropriate) on the child's goals and services, review the plan with the child before finalizing it to ensure the child's input, explain the plan and terms used in the plan in language that the child can understand and include the child (as age appropriate) in periodic service planning meetings.
  2. The Service Plan reflects the principles of family centered practice and identifies how the family will mobilize their strengths and resources to address concerns in a way that ensures safety, well-being and supports permanency for the child.
  3. The DCYF worker encourages full participation of the child's custodial and non-custodial parents, other extended family and service providers to the extent permissible in service planning, including the completion of a strength based family assessment.
    - a. The Department is responsible to locate and engage absent parents and document efforts in the Service Plan.
    - b. If a putative father notifies the Department that he may be the father of a child in care, steps must be taken to determine paternity. Once paternity is established, the father is included in the service planning process.
  4. Family Service Caseworker and Probation Officer coordinate a meeting with family members and service providers at the beginning of the case to capture comprehensive information about the family and to develop the Service Plan.
    - a. The meeting can be scheduled at a DCYF office, in the family's home, at a community provider's office or at a location appropriate to meet the needs of the family.
    - b. For a child placed in a group home or treatment facility, DCYF service planning should be coordinated with the child's treatment plan.
    - c. Documentation of the meeting is recorded in a Case Activity Note (CAN).
    - d. In the event the family is unwilling to participate in the service planning process and/or worker is unable to schedule a meeting with family members and service providers, worker must document in a CAN efforts to engage the family.
  5. For youth sentenced to the RITS, the Service Plan is developed with input from the youth, family, clinical social worker, unit manager, education program representative and health coordinator during the Service Plan Meeting.
- C. Content of the Service Plan
1. Each Service Plan must include a permanency goal specific to the family's situation.
  2. The projected date for achieving the identified permanency goal must be indicated in the Service Plan.
  3. The DCYF worker consults with his or her supervisor to determine which permanency goal is appropriate to meet the needs of the child and family. The goals are:
    - a. Maintenance at home
      - i. For a child remaining at home, the permanency goal is maintenance of the child at home.
      - ii. The child's safety must be assured.
      - iii. In home family services or family preservation shall be considered as options to prevent out-of-home placement of the child.

- iv. The Service Plan must describe the services offered and provided to prevent removal of the child from the home including the individual services provided to each parent and child.
- v. When this goal is selected, worker confirms in RICHIST that "if preventive services arranged by DCYF are unsuccessful, this child may be placed in substitute care."
- b. Reunification
  - i. For a child in placement, the initial permanency goal is reunification in nearly all situations with specific exceptions as approved by the Family Court.
  - ii. Family reunification is the planned process of reconnecting children in out-of-home care with their families by means of a variety of services and supports to the children, their families, and their foster parents or other service providers.
  - iii. Service planning is directed toward addressing those concerns which led to the child being removed from his or her home.
  - iv. The Department will assess and refer the family to the appropriate array of services to achieve reunification in the shortest time possible with consideration for the child's safety and well-being.
  - v. The Service Plan must be designed to achieve a safe placement for the child in the least restrictive (most family-like) setting available, discuss the proximity of the child's placement to the home of the parents and discuss how the placement is consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child.
  - vi. For youth sentenced to the RITS, the initial permanency goal is generally reunification. For youth transferring from FSU or Probation, the goal then reflects prior history. At the time of the discharge/transition meeting, an appropriate permanency goal will be identified after a review of the youth's individual/family needs.
- c. Adoption
  - i. When reunification is not viable, adoption by relatives, foster parents or a licensed adoptive resource is the preferred permanency goal.
  - ii. The Service Plan must document the steps to finalize a placement when the permanency goal is or becomes adoption.
- d. Guardianship
  - i. If the court has determined that reunification and adoption are not viable permanency options, legal guardianship provides the child with the next preferable goal.
  - ii. Legal guardianship enables the caretaker to exercise all the legal rights and responsibilities of a parent without the on-going oversight of DCYF.
  - iii. Guardianship may be an option for youth with or without the termination of parental rights.
- e. Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative
  - i. ASFA indicates that a "fit and willing relative" can provide a "planned permanent living arrangement" and that termination of parental rights does not have to occur within the allotted time frame if a compelling reason is provided to the Court.
  - ii. A relative may be able and willing to care for the child but is not prepared to consider legal guardianship or adoption.

- iii. When determining if this permanency goal is appropriate, worker must consider the relationship between the child and parent(s), the relationship between the child and the relative(s) and the relationship between the relative(s) and the child's parent(s). A compelling reason is documented, and provided to the Court addressing the established relationships and why adoption or guardianship are not viable permanency options.
    - iv. This permanency option is captured in the Service Plan under Permanent Placement with Relative.
  - f. Planned Living Arrangement /Independent living (when appropriate for youth over age 16) and Planned Living Arrangement/Other
    - i. A planned living arrangement is a permanent placement for the child that identifies a lifelong connection.
    - ii. The Service Plan must specify who will be the permanent connection for that youth, if identified, and how DCYF is working to maintain that connection.
    - iii. The permanency goal of Planned Living Arrangement/ Independent Living or Planned Living Arrangement/Other, is appropriate only when documentation has been provided to the court that compelling reasons exist which make all other permanency options unacceptable. These reasons shall be re-examined at each ARU and every permanency hearing to access whether a more preferred permanency option is possible.
- 4. To successfully achieve any permanency goal, specific objectives and tasks must be identified at the outset. Due to the shortened time frames for reunification required by ASFA, it is essential that the DCYF worker immediately clarify with the family each objective and task necessary to achieve the permanency goal. It is equally important to clarify what is not negotiable about the Service Plan and consequences for not meeting the time frames.
  - a. Objectives are focused around the immediate area of risk, are achievable, measurable and time limited.
    - i. The child's needs, which may change over time, are the constant frame of reference during planning and implementation.
    - ii. Objectives will be identified through the completion of ongoing strength based assessments of the family (refer to Policy 700.0075, Family Assessment).
    - iii. The initial Service Plan and all subsequent Service Plans must clearly spell out every objective determined to be necessary to achieve the agreed upon permanency goal.
    - iv. All unmet objectives are included in subsequent Service Plans as well as met objectives to track progress in meeting the permanency goal.
    - v. Objectives are aimed at correcting or significantly alleviating areas of risk that are directly related to the child's safety and well-being.
  - b. Each objective is comprised of individual tasks which, if successfully completed, will achieve the objective.
    - i. Tasks in the Service Plan are individualized, culturally sensitive and designed to enhance a family's strengths to address the safety/risk concerns identified through the completion of ongoing strength based assessments of the family.
    - ii. Tasks are identified for specific individuals to be completed within a specified time frame.



- iii. Tasks are written in straightforward language so that each party clearly understands what is expected of him/her.
  - iv. Tasks are developed for each identified objective.
  - v. Tasks are reviewed with individuals routinely, acknowledging success and encouraging completion when appropriate.
- 5. Section 475 (1)(D) of the Social Security Act states that where appropriate, for a child age sixteen (16) or older, a written description of the programs and services which will help such child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living must be included in their Service Plan.
  - a. This does not mean that reunification efforts should cease or that the goal of the Service Plan must change to Planned Living Arrangement/Independent Living.
  - b. The Department has established a program to assess independent living skills and assist youth with the transition to adulthood (refer to Policy 700.0200, Independent Living). Documentation of a youth's participation in any of the programs offered to assess independent living skills is captured in the Service Plan.
- 6. Worker must involve children and parents or other primary caregivers in all aspects of planning and implementation whenever possible.
  - a. Obtaining signatures on the Service Plan confirms that all parties participated in the development, review and revision of the plan and were provided the opportunity to agree or disagree with the content.
  - b. Each party signing the Service Plan has the right to disagree with the content of the plan and appeal implementation of the plan (refer to section E, Appeal of the Service Plan).
  - c. The following individuals sign the Service Plan:
    - i. Parents/guardians
    - ii. Children twelve (12) years of age or older (with capacity to participate)
    - iii. DCYF primary service workers: FSU Caseworkers/Probation Officers/RITS Clinical Social Workers
    - iv. Foster parents or provider agency representatives who are involved in the development of the Service Plan and are directly responsible to provide the services prescribed in the Service Plan
    - v. Department staff person, other than the primary service worker, who is involved with the family
    - vi. Pre-adoptive parents in cases where parental rights have been terminated and the child is in a pre-adoptive home where the foster parents have initiated the adoption process
  - c. The supervisor signs only after all other signatures are obtained or a reason is given for not signing.
  - d. Once the Service Plan has been signed, any new objective and task agreed to at a later time is added to the Service Plan in the form of an addendum and signed by all appropriate parties.

D. Distribution of the Service Plan

- 1. The primary service worker must use discretion to maintain the family's right to privacy. A signed Authorization to Obtain or Release Confidential Information (DCYF #007) must be obtained when appropriate (refer to Policy 100.0000, Confidentiality).

2. The original Service Plan is filed in the case record. A copy is given to the parents, and copies are provided to children, if age appropriate, and to each outside agency involved in the development of the Service Plan and directly responsible to provide services prescribed in the Service Plan.
  3. The Service Plan includes the Educational/Medical Statement (DCYF #132) which contains federally required health and education information that must be provided to the foster care provider when a child enters placement. DCYF form #132 is updated and provided to the foster parent or foster care provider at the time of each placement. Information required on each child to the extent available and accessible is as follows:
    - a. Name and address of health and educational providers;
    - b. Grade level performance;
    - c. School record;
    - d. Assurances that the child's placement in foster care takes into account proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement;
    - e. Record of immunizations;
    - f. Known medical problems;
    - g. Medication; and,
    - h. Any other relevant health and education information concerning the child determined to be appropriate by the agency.
  4. The DCYF #132 is provided to the foster parents separate from the Service Plan if it is not appropriate for the caretakers to receive the entire Service Plan.
  5. Copies of the Service Plan are periodically provided to the Family Court in situations where there is Court involvement with the family.
    - a. Within thirty (30) days of adjudication on a Dependency/Neglect/Abuse petition;
    - b. No less frequently than on an annual basis at the time of the Permanency Hearing, and;
    - c. At the time of the Family Court review of voluntary placements
  6. A copy of the Service Plan is given to the CASA.
  7. The current Service Plan is available to the Administrative Review Unit in RICHIST for review prior to the scheduled date of the Administrative Review.
- E. Appeal of the Service Plan
1. Family Service Caseworker, Probation Officer or RITS Clinical Social Worker explains the Department's appeal procedure (refer to Policy 1000.0055, Complaints and Hearings) to the parents and child, to the extent of his/her ability to understand, at each signing of the Service Plan (DCYF #032).
  2. Worker provides each parent and child (if of appropriate age) with a Notification of Right to Appeal (DCYF #082) and provides a copy of the complete procedure upon request.
  3. Worker assists each parent and child to participate in the appeal process by providing at a minimum a copy of the DCYF form # 016, Formal Request for Hearing, instructions for completing the form, and guidance as to how to process the appeal through the various stages.